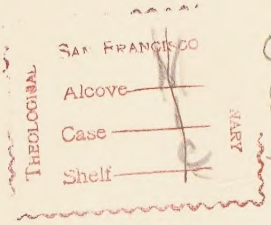
A Pilgrim Jew

Charles Coke Woods

To my beloved Friend
& Brother = =
Who, in the Spirit of
= Jesus =
Comforted me in
the lonely beginning
Days of my
= Ministry =
in Fresno, California.
Many Happy New years-
With the Author's Love.



0
2
f mez.

GIFT OF
Rev. Thomas Boyd, D. D.

A Pilgrim Jew

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/piligrimjew0000char

A Pilgrim Jew

A Romance by Charles Coke Woods

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY
San Francisco Theological Seminary Branch
2 Kensington Road, San Anselmo, CA 94960

Boston: Richard G. Badger
The Gorham Press, 1903

SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL
Alcove N
Case 1
Shelf C

PS
3545
O6C
P5
1903

Copyright 1903 by Charles Coke Woods
All Rights Reserved

03-18651

PRINTED AT THE GORHAM PRESS, BOSTON

INSCRIBED WITH LOVE TO
THE REV. WILLIAM JAMES MARTINDALE, D. D.

A Pilgrim Soul

I

Athwart a mystic, many-stringed harp
A spirit sweeps his magic hand, and sounds
Escape as wild and weird as any song
That pagan priest or sibyl ever sang;
That harp so strange and many cycles old,
Doth yield sweet strains of joy and sobs of woe;
From year to year the spirit thrums the chords
All palpitant with life, nor ever sleeps,
Nor does he weary grow with ceaseless toil;
High souls athrob with holy life do hear
The notes from far away, and clearly see
That He who smites the harp God's angel is,
And that the instrument is human life.

II

I stood once in the far-off Orient,
At close of garish day and bowed my soul
Before the God of life to think and pray ;
The sky broke into astral bloom, and winds
Played " Hide and Seek " among the dewy leaves,
Disporting gaily with the grass and flowers,
And fondly toying ebon locks that wreathed
An infant sleeper's face, aglow with smiles;
And thus I came upon the sleeping child
Who woke and grew puissant with the years.

III

When, swifter than the shuttles fly, time brought
To man's estate, this child of destiny,
I saw him boldly stride away with staff
In hand for distant lands across the sea ;
The gladd'ning glow of Oriental skies
Flings crimson on his smooth and swarthy cheek,
And, as the withered fields drink rain, his eyes
Drink splendor in ; — such is the Pilgrim Jew.
His quest is for the things that others seek, —
The things for which most men do live and die ;
He seeks to find the Holy Grail of joy,
And drink from fountains that will satisfy
The body's thirst, and slake the thirst of soul.
The genius of his race flows in his veins
Today. Like eagles lithe and strong of wing,
God made the Jewish race to front the storm.

IV

The Jew is still the wonder of the age;
Within the fabric of the world's close mesh,
And with the mystic warp and woof of life
Like wizard has this man his fiber wrought,
And spun the thread from his own sturdy soul,
And subtile mind; thro' civic life doth run
The current of his blood, and hist'ry's page,
In every new and every ancient land,
Doth hold the fadeless, fixed, Semitic stamp.
Compeer of pioneers in Art, State craft,
And in the musty lore of Science old
His strong and world-enlight'ning thoughts still reign;
The Hebrew is the Phœnix of the race;
From out the ashes of his life consumed,
He boldly rises, and a victor goes

To mew his youth when all men think him dead,
And shoots forth, javelin-like his mighty thought;
He stands aloof, yet penetrates the mass,
Distinct, persistently his potent self;
His ethnic immortality astounds
The world, but Israel's God works His high will.

V

Of flawless life let not the Gentile prate,
Till he has swept away from his door-step
A thousand sins that blight and blind his race ; —
Proud healer, wouldst thou heal the Jew ? then let
The Jew's Jehovah heal sin's wound in thee.
The critic's charge would fly like boomerang
Flung swiftly from the savage hunter's hand,
To smite upon the guilty breast of him
Who brings the charge of crime, did he but see
As far within the secrets of his life
As he would have his erring brother think
The critic's eye can surely see in Jews.

VI

If trees are known by kinds of fruits they bear,
Then know the Jewish trunk by that which loads
Its boughs. Good trees cannot bear evil fruit,
Nor evil trees bear that which wholesome is;
"The father of the faithful seed" was sprung
From Jewish tree, as was the meekest man
On earth, who climbed the mount and talked with
God;
One brightest star of woman's world was sprung
From Hebrew stock — the noble Esther, queen;
An ancient bard his lyre smote, till flowed
From throbbing chords rare melody of song,
Thro' lengthened years, 'mid sobs and sighs of woe,
Or ringing notes of Great Messiah's reign;
The singer of the Jews whose matchless strains
Float down the tide of ever-flowing years,

Has sung the messages of highest heaven
To soothe the aching hearts of dying men;
And when in battle's front, for truth and right,
Strong soldiers have lost heart, and ready were
To quit the field, again he smote his harp,
When swooning hope revived in victory;
In silence sad his tongue would closely cleave
To palate of his unreplying mouth,
And naught of skill his strong right arm would know,
Did he forget his dear Jerusalem.
Amid devouring flames walked forth three men
Whose hero-hearts beat high with Hebrew blood;
So true were they that God an angel sent
Thro' rifted sky, to hold the hot hell-hounds
At bay with might of heaven's mastery.
Behold the hero of the Sanhedrim;

The gathered might of many men did dwell
In him who fought the beasts at Ephesus;
His grasp held firm the helm of God's young
church,
And when at last the angry gleaming sword
Leaped swiftly from the sheath to drink his blood,
The opening heav'ns disclosed to him a crown,
And angels bore him to his lofty throne.
The stuff that God makes manhood of is spun,
Not from the robes of kings, nor regal crowns,
But from the drapery of truth and light,
Fresh wove in heav'n; — nor high, nor low, nor
rich,
Nor poor, nor Gentile, nor the Jew can claim
Monopoly on wealth of character.

VII

As touching crimes that guilty Jews have wrought
Some others' hands are crimson dyed with gore;
For sin is sin, in Gentile, Jew or bond,
Or Scythian, or free, — the kind is one.
Who knows but Gentile would have wrought the crime
That Judas did, had Gentile felt the gyves
That traitor thralled, as captive slave of hell?
The scorpion of dire remorse did sting
The writhing soul of that despairing man,
And this, I ween, would be his plaint, could tongue
Give speech to mortal anguish and despair: —
"My soul has run the grim gauntlet of grief
To find more woe, unsoothed by help or hope;
The deed I've done, none can undo, nor change
The act that seals my double doom. Remorse

Thrusts me with hell-tipped spears of agony ;
The lust for gold my spirit starved, and darkened
Life's brief day with rayless gloom ; — the sky
That over-domed me once with friendly glow
Of sun, or moon, or stars, now covers me
With deep'ning night no light shall ever break ;
When my lips kissed the face of Him, my Friend,
Who went the length of love to rescue me,
He spake, and asked, ' Dost thou betray thy Lord,
And with a traitor's kiss ? ' His look slew me, —
It was the lonely look of outraged love ;
Alas, the kiss I gave that sweet-souled man,
'Twas false, and filled my soul with wordless woe.
Oh, if those eyes on me once more could look,
If his own voice o'erfull with love's pure rhythm
Could call once more with matchless melody, —
Call back to me the sweet repose of youth,
And innocence again, — life's holy morn ; —
And if his lips so heaven-clean could kiss
This burning sin from off my soul, — to me
That kiss were bliss as sweet as angels know.''

VIII

The whole wide world is debtor to the Jew ;
Had not a Jew, heroic, strong, and sent
Of Heaven, and faithful to His mission
Left His high throne to drink our cup of woe,
We had not found the long way back to God.
O'er all the world hung darkest night, and man,
In dire distress and pain, aloud did cry
For light to shine away the deep'ning gloom ;
On high the pleading call was heard, and Jove
Threw splendor on the ebon sky, and hung
A stellar flame above the holy couch
Of that sweet Babe Divine whose life should live
In human flesh, and who should die the death
Of man, and yet whose life should deathless be, —
The one exhaustless fount of life to men ;
And swift He grew to be a high-souled man,

Clean-handed, heaven-true, and one with God;
A brother to the sons of men, enclothed
With mortal flesh, God's life in humankind;
He came in closest touch with earthly pain,
His guileless lips with eager love did drink,
And drain to utmost depths the chalices
Of earthly states, all over-full with woe;
The common folk heard Him with bounding joy,
And drank sweet solace from His sinless lips;
False men heard his true speech and awe-struck
stood
Before the matchless splendor of His life;
Thus from a soul sick unto death, He spake
The messages of life and peace to all;
A homeless wanderer, and spent with toil,
In weariness that never found a name,
He pleaded with a weary world to find

Repose upon his grief-enravished heart;
Dost think thy chalice bitter, friend? No dregs
Of sorrow's cup instilled by earthly pain
Have touched thy mortal lips, like those that pressed
The lips of Christ on Calv'ry's brow that day,
When rocks were rent, and earthly hopes all died,
And frowning clouds shut out the smile of heav'n—
When God's own face obscured from view, enhanced
The woe of Him who bore the woes of men.

IX

But whither went the wayfarer we saw
With staff in hand come from the distant land,
Gray Orient, to youthful Occident?
Acclimated is he, but Hebrew bides;
As sweet as breath of morn in fragrant spring,
And full of melting melody as are
The songs of happy birds at summer's dawn,
Is this sojourner's love for kith and kin;
The spendthrift splendor of the mid-day sun
Were but the shade of night to him, should die
That love which in his breast is quenchless flame;
Along the rural lanes he wends his way
Thro' honey-scented winds from smiling fields,
And orchards sweet, and gardens all abloom;
He goes in search of some congenial toil,
In village, or in fevered city life;

Beneath the spreading trees he met one day,
At noon, by cooling springs, a Gentile friend;
And when in fountains from the hills they laved
With healing balm their travel-blistered feet,
And quaffed, each one the crystal draught of health,
Hand clasped in hand, fast friends they pledged to be;
In this league-love, arm-locked they went their way
Across the dale, to find Jehovah's seat;
And having reached the temple door, it swung
Full wide, and both went in the fane to pray;
The Jew and Gentile prayed, and thus began,
As one: —"Our Father, God who art in Heav'n:"
The closing hymn was David's Shepherd Psalm.
Nearby that sacred place the Gentile found

His home, and lived and died a ripened man.
The Pilgrim Jew pursued his weary way,
Long miles to meet the test of all his life;
The self-same test that many mighty kings
Stood not, but, failing, slipped from manhood's tree,
And fell as autumn leaves in pelting rain;
A Gentile maid enamored with the youth,
And, passion-blind, would lure his heart with love;
She hunted him both night and day as men
In heated chase pursue the fleeing hart;
At last alone she found him wrapped in thought,
By lone sequestered brook where tangled vines
Threw shade, and where the thrushes came to sing;
Upon him unawares she stole, and wreathed
His neck with rounded arms; as lips pressed lips,
And soul to soul leaped swift as flame to flame;

Her white breast heaved as silver sea when kissed
By wooing moon, and tides embrace the beach;
Her breath smote on his swarthy cheek a flame
That swept his soul as fire-storms sweep the
plain;—
He felt his spirit swooning into bliss,
But like the rush of winds through mountain gorge,
His mighty manhood's strength came back to him,
When like the whipped and tethered hound, passion
Slept, and he stood prince and proud victor;
His way he went, from her's afar, her life
Pursuing him, as rill the hillside's slope;
Within the city's edge their ways diverged,
And thus he slipped the luring leash of love.

X

The Pilgrim learned to love an aged Jew
Who had his home within the city's bound,
Wherein he, too, had found abiding place;
The aged Jew loved also this strong youth
And asked him to his home to be his guest:
Love has a way to reach love's happy end,
Which none but love and lovers understand.
The aged sire and youth did slowly walk
Till, halting near an open gate, he bade
His friend warm welcome to his cheerful home;
In waiting still the loving father stood,
For that accustomed greeting at the gate;
His daughter came, whose every pose was grace,
Came tripping down the lawn to meet her sire;
Her hair like tangled threads from night's black robe
Curled round her soft and snowy swan-like neck;
Her cheeks were kissed to crimson by the dawn,

Her lips were full and round and red as wine,
Upon her maiden soul hung virtue's robe,
Pinned fast by golden rays flung down from heav'n;
Her lyric laugh like song of nightingale
In dulcet ripples rolled upon the air,
And from her heart a mystic arrow flew,
That swiftly smote the youth to his life's core;
Yet strange to say no blood left that sweet wound,
But issued thence instead, a man's whole soul;
And like two honey drops in hearts of blooms,
Two lover's lives were evermore made one;
On speedy wings flew by the golden days,
But even time is slow when eager love
Must wait love's blissful consummation seal;
The songful soul of her he fondly loved
Broke out in lays of love at even time,
And often with the waking birds, she sang
With lute-like voice this song at dewy dawn: —

"When crimson-lipped morning breaths love to
the flowers,
And the Goddess of Dawn rides forth from her
bowers;
When Aurora the sleeping earth wakes with a kiss,
Enrobing her verdure in billows of bliss;
When chalices fragrant in garden or hedge,
Are laden with dew till it slips o'er the edge,
And sprinkles the grasses in baptism sweet,
A chrism so pure that for angels 'twere meet.

"When blossom-cups brimming with dew-
waters, spill
Their over-full fragrance on valley or hill,
When soft-singing birds in the musical dawn
Proclaim to the earth that her darkness is gone;
When nature enswathed in a sweet mellow light,
Spreads out to my vision such ravishing sight—
Then I know that bleak winter has fled long ago
To his frost-draped house in the ice and the
snow."

XI

One long year passed, and wedding bells out-
flung
Their silv'ry notes across the vernal lea,
While side by side with firm clasped lover's hands
Love's vows were sealed beneath the orange
bloom,
And Hymen's Hymn glad youthful voices sang.

XII

A sweet twelve-month and more, these hearts were wed,
And growing love had blossomed into bliss;
An earthly Paradise their home had seemed, —
A fitting place forever to abide;
But life and love do ever richer grow
When heaven's law is followed to the end:
One silent night when all the world reposed
From care and toil, regaining much spent strength,
In slumbrous calm, to meet the morrow's task,
The stillness of that hopeful home was broke
By infant voice that filled and gently thrilled
Two youthful hearts with sweeter sounds than strains
Of lyre or lute could ever be to man;
No printed page records the word the babe

Outbreathed that night with eloquence of life,
But wedded love did all its meaning feel;
Soft infant hands erased the sense of pain,
And time seemed merged in one resplendent day;
But fled the fleeting years to half a score;
And father's heart and mother's heart were wove
Entire in that of their glad, growing boy;
The night was long to them because it hid
His face; the morning seemed for long to wait
Behind the hills to halt his waking smile;
Nor half so sweet was carrolling of birds,
As was the mellow music of his voice,
And all that gave him joy, to them was joy,
And all that gave him pain, to them was pain;
With sacred bands of love the three were bound,
And who would dare to break the tender tie?
Envenomed winds from some bad land blew death

Thro' lattice work across his youthful veins;
And like siroccos o'er Sicilian sands
That blow their blist'ring breath till bright leaves
fade,
Or blossoms droop beneath their dreadful heat,
Thus faded fast, and drooped, this human bloom,
Beneath the dreadful fever's burning blast;
As sinks the red sun in the sea to hide
Away from gaze of men, the stainless soul
Of that pure boy in silence took his leave
And left two bleeding hearts engulfed with woe.

XIII

Full soon the winged years to fifty flew,
But both were leal, and these were golden years;
What God by love had joined in one, no man
By hate or lust or legal trick could part;
All honor give the Jew for loyal love—
For teaching Gentiles 'round the rolling earth,
The stainless sanctity of human homes.

XIV

Once more as in the days of yore they stand
At Hymen's altar and renew their vows,—
The ever holy troth of wedded love ;
Young men and maidens sang for them this song,
Beneath the fragrant boughs of evergreen : —

"The flowers of love for fifty years
Have bloomed for us together,
'Mid songs and sighs, 'mid smiles and tears
In storms and sunny weather ;

Nor tempest nor shadow nor sorrow nor pain
Can sever love's loyal link in twain : —
The sun may fade and the stars may fall,
But our love will outlast them all —
We are sweethearts forever.

Fifty years have frosted our hair,
Since we were joined together;
Time's plow has cut the furrows of care,
But could not break love's tether.

At bridal altar so long ago,
I held her hand as pure as snow;—
Other loves have chilled and died,
With heartless groom or faithless bride,
But ours abides forever."

XV

The months flew by and brought the dismal day,
When she on whom this faithful man bestowed
His life so far away in youthful years,
Must shift the fleshly robe, and then depart;
On pinions swift the spirit faster fled
Than beam of sun, and this was her last word:—
"A thick'ning mist my vision dims, and shuts
The light of morning out with night's deep shade;
Sweet faces dear to me do now escape
My view;—I am alone, nay, nay,—behold,
Some One is with me still; and tho' I die,
I know I live; tho' pulses cease, my soul
Breathes finer air than e'er on earth it knew;
I find my spirit far afield in realms
Where sight fails not, nor shadows ever fall;
Untrammeled now, my soul a freedom feels

Beyond my fondest hope, or sweetest dream;
If this be death, then what, my raptured soul,
Is life: This still is life, and death the key
To richer life, and heaven's high emprise;
Far vaster than the ocean's bound doth swell
Within my soul life's solemn, soundless sea;
'Tis not the flow of passion's rising tide,
Nor yet of full, and strong impulse of life,
But consciousness of love so vast, and strength,
That one, to compass it, an age must grow.
The infinite doth circumscribed appear,
When on the finite over-long men gaze;
Horizons mark the bounds of mortal sight,
But lines like these ne'er fixed the ken of souls;
Life must defeat the tyrant Death, and wrench
The potent scepter from his icy hand;

It will be so some day when he that hath
The power of death shall fail and shall be slain
By Prince of Life whose might shall conquer him.
A corn of wheat falls on the ground and dies,
But from death's sleep it wakes with fairer form,
And more abundant life than it had known;
Thus must it be that each true life, in form
Renewed, shall still live on despite the shock
And chill of death — shall live, and ne'er shall die.
And thus the night of doubt away hath flown
Before the rising day of faith's bright hope;
Against the front of dark despair and death,
This new life hurls its great and growing might,—
Nor can it be that death ends all, but He
Who all things did begin shall end all death."

XVI

Between two walls of bloom they lowered her
To sweet repose within the hill's embrace—
A grassy hill that slopes to meet the dawn ;
The aged Pilgrim's heart went down with her
Upon that fragrant couch of summer bloom ; —
The sweet apocalypse of love once broke
Upon the soul can never wholly fade.

XVII

Again one balmy morn in June I stood
Upon the hill ; the Pilgrim at my side
Was mute, and thro' the dimming tears he gazed
Upon a grass-grown grave and heaved a sigh
From deeps of love as fresh and true as joys
He knew in manhood's bright and happy morn ;
The sleeper there beneath the grass had been
Full fifty years ago the mourner's bride ;
The lover's holy reverie was broke
By happy song : — a singing lark had perched
Near by upon a bush that drooped with bloom,
And with his music filled the home of death ; —
He seemed to sing of vernal vales where trees
Of life do bloom, where death comes not, nor foe
To mar the bliss of reunited love ;
The sweet-voiced bird, its errand done, took wing

And flew away, but with the wrinkled man,
Grief-worn, the deathless song of hope abides.

XVIII

Then twilight came with soothing sleep, and
sealed
With noiseless touch the wayworn trav'ler's eyes;
An angel's fingers loosed the silver chord,
When lo, the alabaster box was broke,
And issued forth the Pilgrim's fragrant soul;
Like scented cloud of incence from the fires
Of holy altars rose that life to God,
And swinging wide, the glowing gates of morn
Admitted him to love's unfading day,
And crowning bliss of great Jehovah's smile.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.

SFTS Library
2 Kensington Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
For renewals call (415) 258-6635

All items are subject to recall.

GTU Library
3 2400 00415 4526
Alcove N
Case 1
Shelf C